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By-Nacci, Chris N.

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This is a description of an introductory Spanish and Spanish American literature course at the University of Akron. Its major feature is the grouping of 100 plays, novels, and collections of short stories by the students into a 7-point difficulty-interest scale. Inclass procedure is explained and suggested methods for assigning reading materials are included. Also presented is the audio-lingual rationale for using class recitation and discussion of reading. (AF)

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REALIZING THE READING COMPREHENSION AND LITERATURE AIMS VIA AN AUDIO-LINGUAL ORIENTATION

CHRIS N. NACCI
The University of Akron

Basic to this report are 100 plays, novels, and collections of short stories read in the introduction to Spanish and Spanish American literature courses at The University of Akron.*

For each book our students read, they fill in and return a 3 × 5 card on which they indicate:

(A) The total hours spent, separately, on reading and on preparing the class narration.

(B) The degree of difficulty, separately, for the language and the content of the book, using a 7-point scale from "__1) very easy; could have read it earlier;" to "__7) very difficult; more than just challenging; enough or almost difficult enough to give up;" its mid-point being "__4) well-suited to my present ability."

(C) Whether they found the content: __1) always interesting enough for them to want to read on; __2) bored them at times; __3) bored them throughout even though not to the extent of stopping their reading.

(D) If they did not finish the book, up to what page they read and the reason for stopping; difficulty, boredom, end of semester, or other reason.

At least once a year, if not each semester, we study the reactions expressed and arrive at a rating or revised rating for each book based on both the easy-to-difficult and the degree-of-interest values the students have indicated. Thus, at the present time, our mid-point rating of 4 goes to:

Pedro Antonio Alarcón, *El sombrero de tres picos* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

Enrique Anderson Imbert, *Los duendes deterministas y otros cuentos* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

Enrique Anderson Imbert, *Fuga* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

Robert Russell Ashburn, *Selected Spanish Short Stories of the 19th & 20th Centuries* (New York: Crowell, 1957).

Courtney Malcolm Batchelor, *Cuentos de acá y de allá* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

Otto F. Bond and Carlos Castillo, *Graded Spanish Readers—Alternate Series, VI-X* (Boston: Heath, 1961).

Agnes Marie Brady, *Cuentos y comedias de España* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952).

Albert Brent, *Cuentos españoles* (New York: Holt, 1950).

Joaquín Calvo-Sotelo, *La muralla* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1962).

Rodolfo Cardona, *Novelistas españoles de hoy* (New York: Norton, 1959).

Alejandro Casona, *Nuestra Natacha* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1947).

Frank N. Dauster, *Teatro hispanoamericano, tres piezas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

Marco Denevi, *Rosaura a las diez* (New York: Scribners, 1964).

Manuel Durán and Federico Alvarez, *Voces españolas de hoy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1965).

Roberto Esquenazi Mayo, *Memorias de un estudiante soldado* (New York: Norton, 1954).

José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, *El Periquillo Sarniento* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1952).

Wenceslao Fernández-Flores, *Yo y el Ladrón y otros cuentos* (Fair Lawn: Oxford Univ. Press, 1957).

Jesús Goytortúa Santos, *Pensativa* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1947).

Raymond Leonard Grismer, *Personajes del mundo hispánico* New York: Ronald, 1961).

Carmen Laforet, *Nada* (Fair Lawn: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958).

Thomas Ballantine Irving, *Paisajes del sur* (New York: Ronald, 1954).

Victor F. Leeber, *Perfiles literarios* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

Miguel Mihura, *Carlota* (New York: Odyssey 1963).

José Milla, *Cuadros guatemaltecos* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

Benito Pérez Galdós, *La sombra* (New York: Norton, 1964).

Carlos Rojas, *De Cela a Castillo-Navarro* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

Victor Ruiz Iriarte, *Juego de niños* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

Ernesto R. Sábato, *El túnel* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

Terrell Louise Tatum, *Cuentos recientes de España* (New York: Scribners, 1960).

Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, *Dos novelas cortas* (Boston: Ginn, 1961).

Rodolfo Usigli, *El niño y la niebla* (Boston: Heath, 1964).

Alberto Vásquez, *Cuentos de la América es-*

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* A paper read at the Forty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the AATSP, Chicago, December 29, 1965.

pañola (New York: McKay, 1952).
Donald A. Yates and John Dalbor, *Imaginación y fantasía: Cuentos de las Américas* (New York: Holt, 1960).

The following rate a 4½:

Manuel Gálvez, *Las dos vidas del pobre Napoleón* (New York: Scribners, 1963).
Manuel Martínez Azaña, *La forja de los sueños* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963).
Ramón José Sender, *Crónica del alba* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1946).

Since the cards were last revised just prior to their presentation with this report at the last December meeting of AATSP, and are the first ones in a decade and a half of use to employ the 7-point scale, our future ratings are expected to be much more reliable. Perhaps, if there are enough requests, we could publish a yearly rating and free our colleagues in the field from being at the mercy of unreliable statements made in the first pages of so many books.

In actual practice, we realize the reading comprehension and literature aims by getting each student to read in Spanish as many plays, novels, and short stories as he possibly can within the time he is obliged to devote outside of class: six hours per week in a course of three credits. So far at The University of Akron, several students have read 35 books in one semester; the fair students, around a dozen or 15; the D students, at least a half a dozen. The correlation, of course, between the number of books read and the over-all grade of the student can get just as unpredictable in specific cases as other factors in our grading system.

We accomplish the reading comprehension and literature aims mainly by helping, expecting, and actually getting the student continually to acquire a faster and more efficient reading ability through performance in Hispanic literature. After completion of the course, most of our students confess that they read faster in Spanish than they ever did in English. This involves:

(1) Reading by whole sentences instead of by single words.

(2) Figuring out the specific meaning of words through their contextual use instead of looking them up. Only when the student is willing to look in the mirror and say to himself: "You miserable wretch, you failed to figure out the meaning," is he justified in looking at the vocabulary or a dictionary. There is no objection, however, to checking on himself subsequently.

(3) Avoiding the actual translation process and grasping the content quickly and directly.

(4) As long as he understands and doesn't bog down, timing himself so that each day he can read more per unit of time than he did the day before.

(5) Reading the easier books first, for instance, our present number 2 ratings:

Edgar Neville, *El baile, comedia en tres actos* (Boston: Heath, 1962).
Edgar Neville, *Dos obras del humorista Edgar Neville* (New York: Dryden Press, 1952).
Armando Palacio Valdés, *Marta y María* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1961).
José María Sánchez-Silva, *Marcelino pan y vino* (Fair Lawn: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961).

Our 2½:

José López Rubio, *Un trono para Cristy* (New York: Dodd-Mead, 1960).
Manuel Rojas, *La ciudad de los Césares* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951).
Manuel Salas, *Sal y pimienta: cuentos, coplas, refranes* (New York: Dryden Press, 1958).
Pedro Villa Fernández, *Respetable público! Comedia en tres actos* (New York: Holt, 1954).

Our 3:

Antonio Buero Vallejo, *En la ardiente oscuridad* (New York: Scribners, 1954).
Antonio Buero Vallejo, *Historia de una escalera* (New York: Scribners, 1955).
Alejandro Casona, *La barca sin pescador* (New York: Oxford, 1955).
Alejandro Casona, *Corona de amor y muerte* (New York: Oxford, 1960).
Alejandro Casona, *La dama del alba* (New York: Scribners, 1947).
Leopoldo Alas (Clarín), *Cuentos de Clarín* (Boston: Houghton, 1954).
Federico García Lorca, *La zapatera prodigiosa* (New York: Norton, 1952).
Ruth Lamb, *Cuentos misteriosos* (New York: Ronald, 1963).
Anastasio López Luna, *El Gaucho Smith* (Boston: Heath, 1952).
José López Rubio, *La otra orilla* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1958).
Gregorio Martínez Sierra, *Sueño de una noche de agosto* (New York: Norton, 1952).
Ferdinando Dante Maurino, *Cuentos hispanoamericanos de ayer y de hoy* (New York: Scribners, 1956).
José Milla, *Aventuras en Centro América* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).
Armando Moock Bouquet, *Rigoberto* (Boston: Heath, 1954).
Conrado Nalé Roxlo, *La cola de la sirena* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957).
Robert Edward Osborne, *Cuentos del mundo hispánico* (New York: American Book Co., 1957).

Mario B. Rodríguez, *The Spirit of Spanish America* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957).

Paul Patrick Rogers, *Florilegio de cuentos españoles* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

Norman Paul Sacks, *Cuentos de hoy y de ayer* (New York: Ronald, 1956).

George D. Schade, *Trece relatos hispánicos* (New York: Odyssey, 1959).

Rodolfo Usigli, *Corona de sombra* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961).

Rodolfo Usigli, *El gesticulador* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953).

Our 3½:

Alejandro Casona, *Los árboles mueren de pie* (New York: Holt, 1953).

Jesús Goytortúa-Santos, *Lluvia roja* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949).

(6) Progressing through the harder works. These, of course, have been made easier by the preceding reading. The abundance of these editions, all edited for students in the United States, make this extensive reading in an audio-lingual environment possible and capacitate the students to read in the following courses the editions printed in Spain and Latin America, of which we have plenty and which our A and B students start reading early in the second semester.

With our complete acceptance of the audio-lingual environment and the great satisfaction that it brings us, we are constantly concerned with that which supplies and nourishes conversation—reading: its objectives and their fuller realization. We find no conflict here. Our conviction, based on years of experiment and research, including experience with NDEA Institute participants, is that the audio-lingual environment can be very effective in furthering the realization of reading comprehension and literature aims. We reject the idea that there needs to exist an irreconcilable bone of contention. We are willing to help the so-called pure audio-linguists in the transitional stage, where they often don't know what to do to develop reading; and we are willing to help their opponents, who often react adversely because of a lack of understanding augmented by fear and insecurity.

At The University of Akron, all of our students take the introductory courses in Spanish and Spanish American literature via an audio-lingual orientation. Students talk in Spanish during the entire fifty-minute class period. They are divided into seminar groups within the same course, section, time, and classroom.

Each student narrates the novel, play, or one or more short stories which he has read before class and expresses his personal reactions and observations to the members of his group, who in turn, may comment and ask for opinions, amplifications, or clarifications. The apportionment of time per student in any particular day varies depending on the nature and length of the material itself as well as on the ability and particular preparation of each student. However, by the end of the semester, it's pretty safe to say that the students have used their opportunities fairly equally.

Since, usually, no two members of the same group read the same books, the students not only get a direct acquaintance with Hispanic literature through the medium of the eye outside of class, but they also do it as they listen to each other in class; and they ARE held responsible for this lingual-audial learning.

Free conversation, then, is used to reinforce the reading and literature objectives. It becomes an integral part of the course. It serves literature. In turn, literature contributes to conversation not only by providing content and interest or motivation, but also through its vocabulary and patterns of speech.

Undoubtedly, you must have already asked yourself two questions. One is: How can one depend on or develop his audio-lingual ability—that is, how can one get the students of various backgrounds in quality and quantity to perform in a Spanish that delights the native and makes him, in turn, ask how it is possible?

First of all, let's glance rapidly at the remaining titles in our number 5 rating:

Hymen Alpern, *Teatro hispanoamericano* (New York: Odyssey, 1956).

Vicente Blasco-Ibáñez, *La barraca* (New York: Holt, 1960).

Camilo José Cela, *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961).

Marco Denevi, *Ceremonia secreta y otros cuentos* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

Federico García Lorca, *Mariana Pineda* (Boston: Heath, 1960).

Sturgis Elleno Leavitt, *Tesoro de lecturas* (New York: Holt, 1957).

Alfredo Marquerie, *Novelas para leer en un viaje* (New York: Scribners, 1963).

Dolores Medio, *Funcionario público* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963).

Ramón José Sender, *Jubileo en el Zócalo* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964).
Ramón José Sender, *Mosén Millán* (Boston: Heath, 1964).
William H. Shoemaker, *Cuentos de la joven generación* (New York: Holt, 1959).
Laurel Herbert Turk, *Cuentos y comedias de América* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950).
José Vasconcelos, *Ulises Criollo* (Boston: Heath, 1960).

Number 6 rating:

Ciro Alegría, *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1945).
Fernando Alegría, *Novelistas contemporáneos hispanoamericanos* (Boston: Heath, 1964).
Enrique Anderson-Imbert, *Veinte cuentos españoles del siglo XX* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961).
Enrique Anderson-Imbert, *Veinte cuentos hispanoamericanos del siglo XX* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956).
Alexandro Arratia, *Diez cuentos hispanoamericanos* (Fairlawn: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958).
José Martínez Ruíz, *Dos comedias de Azorín* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952).
Mariano Azuela, *Los de abajo* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965).
Rosario Beltrán Núñez, *Raíz india* (New York: Odyssey, 1961).
Antonio Buero Vallejo, *Las meninas* (New York: Scribners, 1963).
Miguel Delibes, *El camino* (New York: Holt, 1960).
Rómulo Gallegos, *Doña Bárbara* (New London: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1942).
Carlos Loveira y Chirino, *Generales y doctores* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965).
Benito Pérez Galdós, *El amigo Manso* (Fair Lawn: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963).

These, as the titles in the other ratings, consist mostly of contemporary works. We prefer these in the introductory courses because it is essential that the student deal with the modern idiom as he reads for content and assimilates the language which he will use to express himself in class. A traditional, conventional introduction to literature course progressing through the Medieval, Renaissance, Golden Age periods, etc., is not proper for developing an audio-lingual environment of the type we need for communicating with the Spanish-speaking peoples of today. We keep in mind that the student's reading of literature must also serve the language aims of our audio-lingual orientation.

The other question is: What does the instructor do? He listens and may correct and complement in Spanish, of course, from his greater background in the life and the works of the authors, in the literary movements and their significance. He guides, motivates, and sets the stage, including its atmosphere. He also corrects the use of the language. In each case, the instructor uses his judgment as to the type of errors he will correct and as to how many corrections he will make for the particular student, since two students may be at different stages of fluency and this will influence the number of times each can safely be interrupted for a language correction, etc.

For each occasion that the instructor wishes to evaluate and record a score for the student in his audio-lingual performance, he uses one of our other 3 × 5 cards which have printed on them a 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 option to be encircled after each of the following considerations:

(1) The student's presence (as in other work fields, one is paid for the days worked); this indicates at least a minimum of preparation and dependability.
(2) Audibility: how well he can be heard by his group members and the instructor. The degree is important in the give-and-take, mutual teaching-and-learning situation of the audio-lingual orientation.
(3) Quantity of narration: the better students in each group are always expected to take up the slack.
(4) How much, how well, and how easily the speaker explains vocabulary and ideas that trouble his listeners. How he does this reflects on the adequacy of his preparation and progress in learning.
(5) The extent to which the student assimilates corrections and does not repeat the same error.
(6) Assimilation of new vocabulary and patterns of speech found in his reading.
(7) How Spanish his sentence structure sounds; freedom from English and double translation.
(8) Correct use of prepositions and conjunctions, as: *pero, sino, a, por, para,* etc.
(9) Verbs: mood, voice, tense and sequence.
(10) Agreement: nouns, adjectives, articles, subject-verb.
(11) Minimum of groping for words; progress in the elimination of the American "uh" sound during and as a substitute for a pause.
(12) Phrasing and intonation, linking.
(13) Pronunciation: a-e-i-o-u, b-d-c-g-h-l-ll-rr-v-z, syllabification, stress, etc.

Which of these thirteen will be con-

sidered during any one specific occasion and their weight in arriving at a grade will depend on the judgment of the instructor at the particular sequence of time.

Thus, the instructor is an active participant of each seminar group successively or semi-concurrently. However, the instructor should inject himself as sparingly as possible. In our concept of the audio-lingual orientation, the students have the floor or platform. In a sense, the instructor is offstage. When a student tends to look and talk to him, the instructor reminds him to talk to his group members. The instructor sits so that he is not facing the speaker on whom he is focusing his attention. The student's eyes must be on his fellow-students to make sure, always, that he is communicating successfully with them in Spanish (and this is more of a job than communicating with the instructor who practically knows ahead of time what he is trying to say). If the speaker notices the listeners' eyes to be puzzled or troubled, he must paraphrase or explain the troublesome expression he is using.

Now for a look at a specific group of students: in our current day class, half of the members may be considered majors or minors in Spanish. With the exception of one who had spent a summer in Mexico and another who had lived in Argentina for a while, the students came into the course having in common little experience in conversation in Spanish. They were and still are far from being a homogeneous group in ability.

On the first day of the semester, two portions of the Spanish form MA of the MLA-Cooperative Foreign Language Tests were administered to them. In LISTENING COMPREHENSION, they placed in the following mid-percentile ranks: 95, 93, 93, 90, 89, 83, 83, 82, 82, 75, 67, 67, 62, 56, and 47. In READING COMPREHENSION, they ranked: 94, 91, 90, 89, 87, 85, 82, 79, 75, 70, 70, 70, 69, 69, 50, and 45. Some that ranked high in READING ranked low in LISTENING, and vice versa.

During the first three weeks of the semester, all members of the class read the same books, in this order: *La barca sin pescador, En la ardiente oscuridad,* and *Pensativa,* all of which they had been required to buy in order to avoid the initial rush and competition. They usually buy three or four each semester.

In class, the original eighteen members were divided into six groups of three. Although the students were not informed of it (and I don't believe in spelling out all my why's and wherefore's), each group contained one of the higher, one of the middle, and one of the lower Reading and Listening comprehension combinations of the mid-percentile ranks.

On the first day of class, they were instructed that beginning with the second day, they would talk on each book in Spanish during two class periods and would take a written test on the following class period. In each instance, the best of the three students, whoever he or she might prove to be, would immediately begin the class hour by saying to his group members: "Con su permiso." This, I assured them (with a bit of tongue in cheek), would automatically eliminate their being stigmatized with boldness or monopoly, as might possibly be the case if one started talking without asking permission. "Naturally," I added, "the others would all be equally considerate and courteous and would immediately grant permission by saying: 'Suyo,' and 'Tuyo.'"

The first speaker was to speak as long as he could without wasting time in groping and pausing unduly. He would concentrate on what he remembered easily and not worry about missing some points. I explained that any amount of undue worry or fear of forgetting would be self-defeating since it in itself would cause a loss of memory. I would be satisfied with the positive aspects of their performance and would never inflict a third-degree on them.

If at any time the speaker did become aware of having left out something important, all he needed to do was to say: "Punto atrás," and the other members of the group would know that he was flashing back, so to speak. If the speaker

couldn't think of a word, he should make use of a synonym, an antonym, or explanation combining words and gestures if necessary. I would not supply him with the needed word, at least not until he had already conveyed the meaning otherwise. If he forgot the name of a character, he could call him by some other name. The only exception would be in the case of symbolic ones.

The listeners were to try to grasp what the speaker was saying by thinking of the whole sentence—or whole expression—in the context of what was said previously or what was coming. They should not worry about a word already expressed but should be listening in order to catch the light to be thrown on that word and in order not to lose all that was to follow. Any undue preoccupation with a previous word or idea might cause the loss of what was coming. They should ask for an explanation only if a block to understanding perseveres.

The listeners should supply words to the speaker whenever they could. When sure of themselves, they should also correct the speaker's errors. After the speaker talked all he could, the others would fill in, make comments, ask him questions, and discuss content, style, etc., to the extent that they could and wished to. As one group would get through, its members would join the others still talking.

After the third week, they were instructed to make sure that they no longer read the same books as others in their group. They were given a list of the 100 titles, all in the University Library: the plays and novels with a number 6 rating as well as all collections of short stories would be found on open stacks; the rest, on three-day reserve with the privilege of one renewal. I recommended that they read the easier books first; but if the number 2's were all out, they should try a number 3; if the 2's and 3's were unavailable, they should try a 4, etc.

Periodically, I recombined the groups as the students revealed by their performance both their reading comprehension and audio-lingual proficiencies. By mid-semester, the poorer students had been adequately shown the higher standards of the better students and what they themselves should be striving for. Also, as the person responsible for the progress of the class as a whole and for each individual according to his potential, I could not afford to continue the drag of the poorer students on the better ones. So I regrouped the sixteen survivors into eight couples of fairly equal audio-lingual performance in class. This permitted me to give more appropriate attention to each individual with the minimum of interference with those who did not need the same focus.

At the stage they were in at the time of this report last December, I would not have hesitated to pair off any of the top ten with a native, as I did the year before when I had two Cubans taking the course; and as I am doing this semester in which I have a Colombian as one of our class members. I was doing it the first semester in the evening section, in which I had two natives: one from Madrid and the other from Havana, just as I am doing it now with the same ones plus a Panamanian. In the evening section of the year before, I had a Chilean, a Panamanian, a Peruvian, and a Cuban all in the same class with nine Americans. I rotate the natives every three or four weeks with the top Americans in the class.

When I say, "I would not hesitate," I mean it literally and with the following in mind: (1) that the American student must make so few mistakes in language that he doesn't become a pain or a bore to the native; (2) that the American must communicate the content of his reading so successfully in Spanish that the native feels that he has been made adequately acquainted with it and does not need to read the book himself, although he may be attracted to it and may wish to read it anyway; (3) that through hearing the American's command and assimilation of the language, and watching his expression when the American is listening to him, the native has confidence that he is being understood sufficiently when he relates his own reading and expresses his own re-

actions and opinions.

As of December 17 (and with two more weeks before semester exams), the books read and reported on in Spanish by the members of the day section numbered as follows: 25, 24, 22, 22, 19, 18, 18, 17, 16, 16, 14, 14, 14, and 13. Even the minimum could be considered a respectable number for an introductory course in literature. Some students had become so motivated and enjoyed the literature in the audio-lingual orientation so much that they used their vacation time to read more!

Not only is our Department of Modern Languages convinced on the need to realize the reading comprehension and literature aims via an audio-lingual orientation, but last December the University Council as well as the Academic Policies and Curriculum Committee of The University of Akron gave it a formal endorsement after due consideration by the faculty.